



# AMERICAN YOUTH SOCCER ORGANIZATION

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## TESTIMONY ON MICHIGAN S.B. 31

Presented By Jim DeBrabander, Section Referee Administrator  
Before The Senate Judiciary Committee  
February 3, 2015

Distinguished members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, my name is Jim DeBrabander. I am the Section Referee Administrator for Section 8 of the American Youth Soccer Organization. AYSO is a youth soccer organization founded in 1964 with over 500,000 players nationwide. Section 8 covers all of Michigan and Indiana. AYSO has over 4,400 registered volunteers in the State of Michigan that would fall under the additional protections provided by Senate Bill 31.

I am here on behalf of AYSO to strongly support Senate Bill 31 to address the growing trend of assault and abuse directed toward sports officials.

As an entirely volunteer organization, AYSO struggles daily to find enough volunteers to meet the needs of our players. Especially difficult is recruiting volunteers. The number one reason given as to why people are unwilling to volunteer to referee is that they don't want to be treated the way they see other referees being treated.

Once we actually get volunteers to sign up, we spend at least 8 hours with them for formal training and countless hours mentoring and improving their skills. Approximately half of them will quit in their first season. Another ten percent will not return for a second season. Again, the number one reason they state for leaving is due to abuse from coaches and spectators.

We believe the passage of Senate Bill 31 will help to send a strong message to those participating in, and those spectating, sporting events; that this type of abuse will not be tolerated. Further, passage of this bill sends a message to sports officials that we support them.

Thank you for your time and consideration

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